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Rory M. Christian, Chair

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PSC Announces New Regulations Regarding Use of Names and Pronouns

New Regulations Requires Utilities to Use Customers' Preferred Names and Pronouns

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved a new Home Energy Fair Practices Act (HEFPA) regulation that require all utilities operating in New York State to establish procedures for applicants and customers to use their preferred names and pronouns.

“These regulations continue our advancement for a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive society,” **said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian.** “Acknowledging a person’s gender identity is an essential step along that path.”

The regulations are required by amendments to the Public Service Law and General Business Law and will ensure that utility corporations, municipally owned utilities, waterworks corporations, and telephone service companies provide residential customers and applicants for residential service with an option to request the use of a preferred name and/or preferred pronouns in all written or oral communications.

The state’s major electric and gas utilities said the statutory changes better align utility regulations with current societal practices. Going forward, utilities must use a customer’s legal name as required by law. Utilities and municipalities with utilities will establish a written procedure to allow applicants and customers to request the use of their preferred name and/or preferred pronouns.

Nearly 80,000 New Yorkers identify as transgender. Gender pronouns might be he/him, she/her or gender-neutral pronouns people choose to refer to their gender identity. Using the proper pronouns demonstrates respect, and knowledge of value and inclusion when affirming one’s gender identity.

The regulations provide that any documentation provided to a utility or municipally owned utility will only be used to verify the identity of the individual. However, a utility or municipalities corporation and municipalities that provide utility service may require “reasonable proof of identity using their legal name” for purposes consistent with the allowance of the use of a preferred name and/or pronouns. Further, the Commission regulations provide enforcement provisions in the case where a utility or municipality that provides utility service shall willfully and repeatedly fail to use an applicant or customer’s preferred name and/or preferred pronoun.

Today’s decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission’s Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number 22-M-0430 in the input box

labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.